Sabzpari's Jaltarang

A humorous play about the environment

Written by **Shahid Anwar** | Illustrated by **Nilesh Gehlot**

LEVEL 4

Original Story in Urdu **'Sabzpari ka Jaltarang'** by Shahid Anwar
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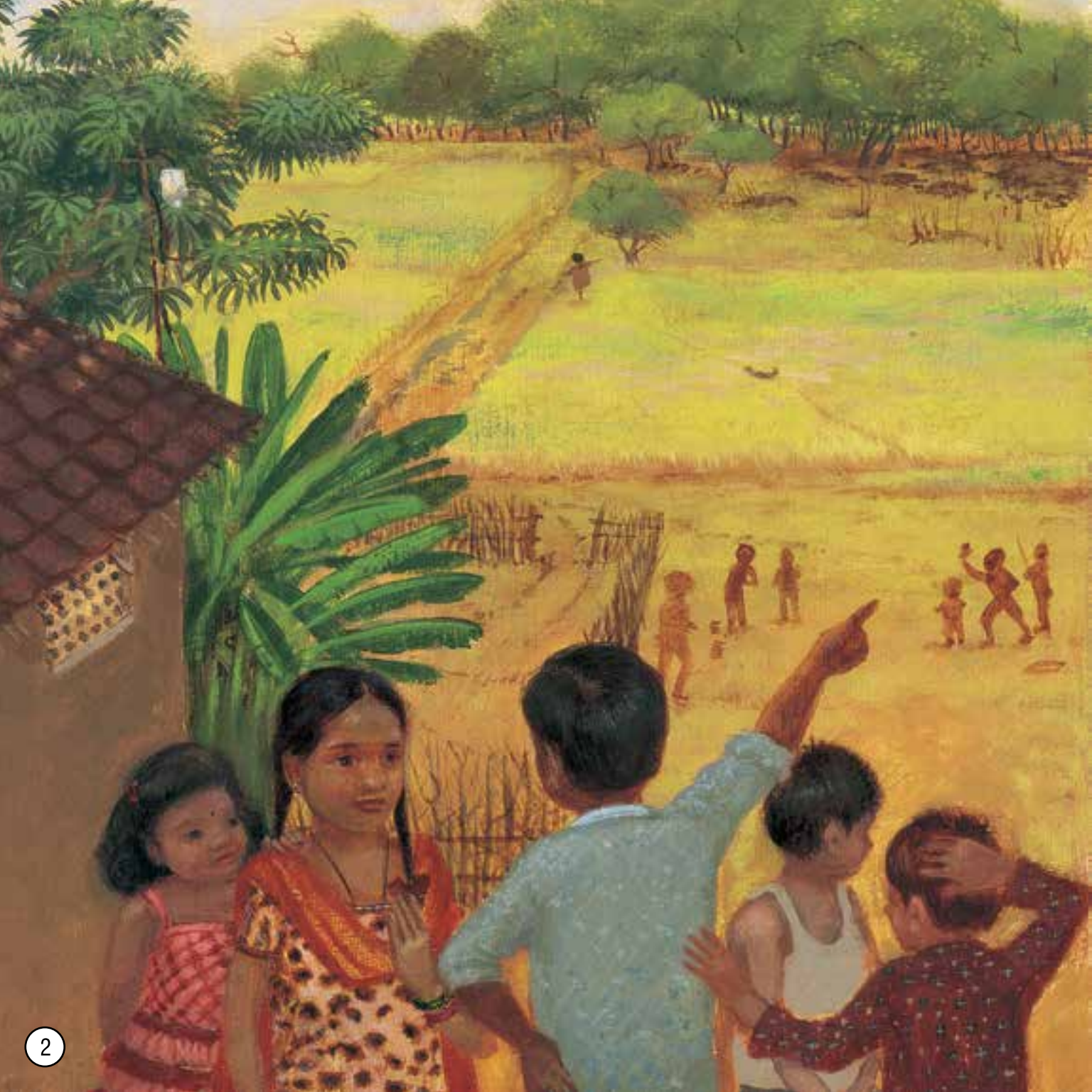

Sabzpari's Jaltarang

This play can be performed by a cast of ten to fifteen characters. The main characters are a nine-year old girl, Kaasni; eight-year old boy, Faizan; a green fairy, Sabzpari; a goat; a mother, a father, grandparents and some children aged four to twelve.

The stage is lit up. Children circle the stage and sing in chorus.

Chorus : Our sweet little village, our very own village
Sunlit by our friends, shaded gently by our parents
One team sings.

First Team : Inside the village!

Second Team : No, no, outside the village!

First Team : No, no, no, inside the village!

Second Team : No…outside…outside

First Team : Inside!

Second Team : Outside!
A little girl pipes up.

Little Girl : Let us do this…

Chorus : Let us do what?
The little girl sings an explanation.

Little Girl : Inside and outside the village, outside and inside the village!
All the other children look happy and sing together.

Chorus : Inside and outside the village
There is a b…i…i…g pond
Where water flows all the year round
The same little girl corrects them again.

Little girl : But…

Chorus : But?
The girl sings.

Little girl : It has no frogs

Chorus : Nor the queen of water
Even though the pond is never dry

Little girl : Another strange thing, a tale with a sting…
She asks herself.

Little girl : What is a tale with a sting?

Chorus : Everybody loves this village
But the pond has mystery which is very hush hush…
A boy and a girl mimic a well known advertisement.

Boy : Yes, yes to the village and no, no to the pond? What is the idea Sir ji?
The first team goes to the right of the stage.

First Team : It's our village!

Second Team : Yeah Yeah Yeah!
The first team moves to the left of the stage.

First Team : It's our pond!
The second team pulls the children of the first team back.

Second Team : No No No!

Chorus : Nothing living ever goes there
No kid, no granny, no kitten or Tom!
From the First Team a child wrapped in a towel moves to the left of the stage towards the pond. An older child stops him.

Older child : Where to, my friend? And to what end?

Small boy : For a bath my dear, in the pond that is near!
The older child pulls him back.

Older child : You must be joking friend, this really has to end
Please forget the pond, go under a tap round the bend!
Singing the last two lines the Chorus runs after the small boy who exits. From the other team, a girl walking on all fours goes towards the pond. Every now and then she mimics a goat and says 'Meh-me Meh-me' as she sings and moves towards the pond.

Goat : A goat is the queen of the water, her life depends on the water…
All the children gape at her and the advertisement girl moves forward and twists her ear.

Girl : Don't you go to school?

Goat : Yes I do

Girl : Which School?

Goat : DGS

Girl : DGS?

Goat : Yes, DGS, Delhi Goat School!
The goat says 'Meh-me Meh-me' and moves ahead. The girl stops her.

Girl : If you go to school then why are you singing such nonsense?

Goat : Nonsense?

Girl : Yes, that a goat is the queen of the water
Her life depends on the water…

Goat : But that is absolutely right! *(Sings)*
A goat is the queen of the water, her life depends on the water
All the children sing for her.

Chorus : No, a *fish* is the queen of the water
Her life depends on the water!
A fish, not a goat. Understood?

Goat : Not a fish, a goat!

Chorus : No no, not a goat, a fish!
The goat turns to everybody and says:

Goat : Who made the fish the queen of the water?
All the children pause and look at each other. Then they speak together.

Chorus : We did!

Goat : And who made the goat the queen of the water?

Chorus : Who did?

Goat : I did! (*She moves forward singing)*
A goat is the queen of the water
Her life depends on the water!
The children run after her.

Chorus : But where are you going, Queen Meh-me Meh-me?

Goat : When they stopped the water supply, what could I do *o, behna bhai*?
It was a matter of my life, I did not want to die
Towards the pond I am going, to quench my thirst that is growing!
The goat moves forward. The children block her way.

Chorus : No, no, not there!

Goat : But that is where I am going, for my thirst is only growing

Chorus : No, no, not there!

Goat : But why?

Chorus : Whoever goes to that side
Never returns alive!
The goat screams and runs
to the other side.

Goat : Mummy!
They all encircle her and dance.

Chorus : Whoever goes to that side, never returns alive!

Goat : So how do I quench my thirst?
I am Water Queen - the First!

Chorus : We will find a way, that much we can say
The children run in teams to the left and right. The wings fill up with water bottles and straws. The goat puts a straw in a bottle and drinks. Kaasni and Faizan come to the forefront and stand in the spotlight.

Kaasni : I don't understand one thing Faizan

Faizan : What?

Kaasni : Why is everybody so scared of the village pond?

Faizan : Kaasni, there is danger…

Kaasni : Ha! Danger! What danger?

Faizan : They say that the pond is under the spell of a *jadugarni*, a sorceress. Whoever goes to that side, human or goat, they say she begins to play her *jaltarang*. No ordinary *jaltarang* this one. It is a magical *jaltarang*!

Kaasni : Oh come on! A *jaltarang* is a *jaltarang*. Whether my Abba plays it or your *jadugarni*!

Faizan : No Kaasni. Her *jaltarang* spells danger. D. A. N. G. E. R. As soon as its sound enters your ears, human or goat…

Kaasni : And what happens?

Faizan : Don't ask…danger on that side!

Kaasni : What danger? That is just what I am asking…

Faizan : They say that as soon as the sound of the *jaltarang* enters your ears…

Kaasni : Yeah, yeah human or goat…what else?

Faizan : …you are as good as gone!

Kaasni : Where?

Faizan : That is what nobody knows!

Kaasni : Meaning?

Faizan : Meaning, that no sooner than the sound enters your ears, your life is gone!

Kaasni : Meaning…no breath?

Faizan : Yeah, no sense! You lose it all…you lose your senses and you get sucked towards the source of the sound…
He pauses and looks at Kaasni as if expecting her to complete the sentence.

Kaasni : Human or goat!

Faizan : Yes. Exactly like a magnet pulls a nail. You can keep calling out but won't be heard. You look neither here nor there. Up or down. Not left nor right. You only look towards the source of the sound of the *jaltarang*…

Kaasni : And then?

Faizan : And then vanish!

Kaasni : Vanish completely?

Faizan : Vanish completely!
Kaasni is momentarily silenced as if she has been deeply affected.

Kaasni : Traceless?

Faizan : Absolutely without a trace!

Kaasni : You've seen it?

Faizan : No, I've heard

Kaasni : From whom?

Faizan : From my elders!
Kaasni turns to the other children and calls out:

Kaasni : *Khala*! O *Khala*!
A girl playing Faizan's mother appears.

Khala : What is it Chashni?
Faizan checks her.

Faizan : Not Chashni, Amma! Kaasni!

Khala : Yes yes, that is what I mean
What happened *beti* Ragini?
Faizan attempts to check her again.

Faizan : But Amma…
Kaasni stops him and asks Khala:

Kaasni : *Khala*, that pond on that side…
Before Kaasni can complete her sentence Khala stutters.

Khala : The pond…danger on that side…
Khala beats a hasty retreat. Kaasni tries to stop her.

Kaasni : *Khala*! Listen to me…
Khala pauses.

Kaasni : Have you seen that danger?

Khala : No, I've heard about it

Kaasni : From whom?

Khala : From my elders!
Khala returns to where there are other children.

Kaasni : Now let us ask her elders
She calls out:

Daadu, O *Daadu*!
A child pretending to walk with a stoop like an old man comes forward.

Kaasni : *Daadu*… that pond that side…
Daadu wants to hear no further and turns to leave.

Kaasni : *Daadu*… the pond…
Daadu returns and raises a finger to his lips to demand silence. Kaasni falls silent. Daadu comes close and whispers:

Daadu : The pond… Danger…

Kaasni : Have you seen anything?

Daadu : No, I've heard

Kaasni : From whom?

Daadu : From my elders!
Saying this Daadu returns to where there are other children.

Kaasni : So we will ask his…
She opens her mouth to call out and stops as she remembers something.
His elders are not even around so how can we ask…

Faizan : Then ask the younger ones

Kaasni : Yes…let us ask them…
Kaasni turns towards the children and calls out. That part of the stage is lit up. The children are still playing with the goat.

Daksha, Raksha, Shama, Rama, Chinku, Rinku!

Chorus : Why are you yelling? We are all right here!

Kaasni : Now tell me, have any of you ever seen anything?

Chorus : Where?
Kaasni points to the right.

Kaasni : There!

Chorus : There! Over there is Danger!

Faizan : Has anybody ever seen that Danger…ous…

Chorus : No, we've heard

Faizan : From whom?

Chorus : From our elders… who else?

Faizan : But we asked the elders and they knew nothing…

Chorus : But they all believe there is danger. Isn't it?
The children get busy playing.

Kaasni : That is the trouble with elders!

Faizan : What?

Kaasni : That they know nothing but believe many things

Faiza : What should we do now?
Kaasni thinks for a moment and internally resolves to do something.

Kaasni : Before we believe anything we must know something about it…

Faizan : Meaning?

Kaasni : Meaning that we will go to the pond and solve the mystery of the *jaltarang*!
Faizan quails.

Faizan : Pond? Us? Meaning you? Alone? Absolutely alone?

Kaasni : Yes…pond…not just me…you too!

Faizan : Me? Never!

Kaasni : Oh yes!

Faizan : At no cost…never!

Kaasni : At every cost…yes… you and I and everybody!

Faizan : Who everybody?

Kaasni : Daksha, Raksha, Shama, Rama, Chinku, Rinku, Pinku and…

Faizan : Nobody will go there!

Kaasni : They will all go

Faizan : Why don't you ask them?
Kaasni calls out to the children:

Kaasni : Daksha, Raksha, Shama, Rama, Chinku, Pinku!

Chorus : Why are you yelling? We are right here!

Kaasni : Who will come with us?

Chorus : Where? *Kaasni and Faizan point towards the pond together.*

Kaasni, Faizan : There! *All the children run away scared.*

Chorus : *(The Chorus sings)* No, no, no ji!
Over there is real danger, no one ever goes there
No human, animal or stranger
Over there lives a *jadugarni*, who doesn't allow this journey
When you hear the *jaltarang*, you know its time to run
The hen vanishes and so does the rooster, boy or girl, brother or sister
No living thing there is safe, beware the warning the *jadugarni* gave!

Kaasni : Have you all seen this?

Kaasni looks towards Faizan as if expecting his help. He pitches in.

Faizan : Yeah, tell us… has anybody seen anything? I mean… anybody at all?
Chorus shakes its heads and hums.

Chorus : No no, not really!
Kaasni sings to the Chorus.

Kaasni : That is the problem, you see that is the problem
Doubts in my mind, many doubts in my mind
For no reason at all, we end up in a bind
We just heard something but never set eyes on the sight!

Chorus : What you say is absolutely true…but what can we do?
Kaasni and Faizan sing together to the children.

Kaasni, Faizan : Believe it if you see it, believe it if you know it
True or False, the choice is yours!
A small boy who is in a habit of using big words steps forward and asks:

Small boy : But what is the PLAN OF ACTION?
Faizan makes fun of him.

Faizan : PLAN OF ACTION…where did you get this one from?

Small boy : But natural…from Papa!

Kaasni : Now, don't scrap the two of you! The plan of action is, tomorrow before sundown, we will set off towards the pond…

Chorus : *(in awe)* Tomorrow? You mean right the next day?

Kaasni : Yes, because there is no point in delaying it

Girl : But if the elders find out about our plans?

Small boy : NO ISSUE…you have to take some risks if you want to find out the truth

Faizan : Where did you hear this one? From Papa?

Small boy : No, it is original!

Kaasni : You both are at it again!

Faizan : This mini-Englishman does not know the simple fact that we come to this side to play anyway. While playing, we can head out towards the pond. In twos and threes. Nobody will suspect anything!

Small boy : NO NEEDLE OF SUSPICION…but why will nobody suspect anything?

Kaasni : Because they will all believe that we will never go to that side
The girl playing the goat asks:

Goat : And what if there is actually a *jadugarni* there?

Kaasni : That is what we are going to find out, so what is there to be scared of?

First boy : But what about her *jaltarang*?

Kaasni : We have a solution to that. We will take a lot of cotton wool along with us. We will make many many cotton buds with it. As soon as we hear the sounds of the *jaltarang*, we will stuff them in our ears. And we are out of the spell of the *jadugarni*!

Second boy : This solution sounds good!

Faizan : So is everybody saying yes?

Chorus : Yes!

Kaasni : So we meet tomorrow. Everybody remember, tomorrow evening over here and then…
They all complete her sentence pointing towards the pond.

Chorus : …there! *The lights go dim as if it is night. The children go to sleep on the stage. There is complete darkness for some time. A mother's voice can be heard.*

Mother's voice: Why have you woken up so early? It is not morning yet!
As soon as this voice stops, the stage is lit up. Kaasni and Faizan are not seen. The other children start their morning routine as they sing. Some brush their teeth, while others wash their face, comb their hair, or pack their school bags. Everything is done in such a hurry that nothing is completed properly. It appears that all the children are very excited.

Chorus : From the morning, I can only think of the evening
Why isn't the time passing? It is so exciting
To be doing what we are doing!
What is bigger, the truth or fear? We have to find out oh dear!
Believe it if you see it, believe it if you know it
True or False, the choice is yours!
During the song mothers, fathers or grandparents can be heard.

Mother's voice : Oh what is the tearing hurry today? At least let the school gates open…

Papa's voice : At least put tooth paste on your brush!

Grandma's voice: At least wash the soap off…
As soon as the song ends the lights dim. Kaasni and Faizan are not seen and the first team of children enters scattering cotton wool in the air. It seems it is raining cotton wool on stage. The children sing as they scatter the cotton.

First Team : Cotton, lots of cotton, its raining cotton
As we wait for sundown, to solve the mystery of sound
Cotton Cotton, more cotton all around!
The children exit singing this song. The lights become brighter. From the other wing a second team of Mummy, Papa and elders enters. Somebody is carrying a shrunken pillow while somebody else is carrying a torn mattress or a quilt on their shoulder. The children sing in chorus.

Second team : Cotton Cotton, where have you gotten?
Child with the pillow comes forward.

Child with the pillow : This used to be a pillow, soft, fat, cosy and mellow
Now it is flat and bad, it will make your sleep sad!

Second Team : Cotton Cotton, where have you gotten?
The child with the mattress on his head steps forth.

The child with the mattress : Once this was a mattress, now it is in tatter-ess
Lots of empty space, oh such a disgrace!

Second team : Cotton cotton, where have you gotten?
A girl steps forward with a quilt on her shoulder.

Girl with the quilt : This used to be a quilt, before the cotton spilt
Has it become a mat? Or even worse than that?

Second Team : Cotton Cotton, where have you gotten?
The children with the pillow, mattress and quilt sing with an air of warning.

Three children : Whoever has been up to mischief, Beware! Beware!
Mummy and *Nani* have eyes at the back of their head
To catch you and ground you, you can bet!
All the children leave the stage. The scene changes. At the rear you can see a moon on the curtain. Children use coloured sheets to create the effect of waves in the pond. Many animal sounds can be heard to make the scene look scary. Faizan and Kaasni enter. Faizan looks scared and Kaasni thoughtful. Every now and again, Faizan attempts to flee but Kaasni manages to hold him back with a combination of threats and cajoling.

Faizan : Should we turn back?

Kaasni : Why?

Faizan : Nobody else has turned up!

Kaasni : So what? They will come…

Faizan : Who knows if they will. Should we turn back?

Kaasni : *(Scolding him)* What is this turn back, let's turn back? Now that we are here, we will go back only after we have done what we came for!

Faizan : Alone?

Kaasni : If we are alone then so be it!

Faizan : All by ourselves?
Kaasni moves forward as she thinks. Faizan holds her hand.

Kaasni : Let us sit on that rock and wait a while for them…
Both of them sit to the right of the stage on a small rock. The silence deepens. First both of them face the pond. As soon as an animal's distant cry gets louder, Faizan is scared and turns to face the audience instead. Kaasni tries in vain to make him face the pond again. In the end she also faces the audience.

Kaasni : *(to Faizan)* A mouse would be better than you!

Faizan : How?

Kaasni : We are all after its life, but it still makes a hole inside our house…

Faizan : That shows its stupidity!

Kaasni : No, that shows its spirit. It risks death to be able to live!

Faizan : If you will keep talking about life and death, I'm going…
Faizan gets up to depart. Kaasni stops him.

Kaasni : Ok, let us wait for a while. By then the others will come

Faizan : Nobody is going to come!

Kaasni : Nobody is better than your mouse!
Kaasni falls silent. Both of them wait for the other children to come. After a long interval Faizan breaks the silence.

Faizan : Nobody came here and nobody came there…

Kaasni : There?
Faizan gestures towards the pond.

Faizan : Yes, there!

Kaasni : Nobody is going to come there. All this magic, *jadugarni*, *jaltarang*…it is all a big myth!

Faizan : But one thing is really strange!

Kaasni : What?

Faizan : The pond has neither fish nor frogs!
Kaasni turns and looks at the pond.

Kaasni : Really!

Faizan : *(Suddenly fearful)* No fish, no frogs, no Kaasni, no Faizan!

Kaasni : Be quiet, you great big wet cat!

Faizan : First you call me a mouse, then you call me a cat … I am not going to stay here!
Faizan is about to get up and stalk away in a temper. As he takes the first two steps, the sound of the jaltarang is heard. He stops in shock and then runs and holds on to Kaasni. Kaasni is also startled. The tempo of the jaltarang gradually increases. The waves in the water become bigger and on the curtain in the rear, colourful fish and frogs become visible.

Kaasni : Wow! What is that?
Faizan looks and as he spots the fish and frogs he hugs Kaasni even tighter. The sound of the jaltarang is very loud now. Kaasni shouts with all her strength.

Kaasni : Who is there?
Nobody can be seen but the sound of the jaltarang gets even louder. Kaasni shouts again.

Kaasni : Who is it? Who is playing the *jaltarang*?
When there is no answer, Kaasni gently disentangles herself from Faizan and moves towards the waves. As she moves a step there is a loud splash and somebody slowly rises from the waves. Her hair is green and so is her dress. In front of her, in the water, floats a jaltarang. As soon as Kaasni sees that, she gets scared too. She runs and hugs Faizan. Seeing this the person begins to laugh. Slowly Kaasni turns towards her and seeing her laugh begins to laugh too. First it is a scared laugh and then a more full and hearty one. Seeing the two of them laugh Faizan also begins to laugh nervously in spurts. Kaasni asks the person:

Kaasni : Who are you? The *jadugarni*?
Hearing the question the person laughs even louder.

Kaasni : Whoever you are …you could not be the *jadugarni*!

Sabzpari : Why?

Kaasni : Because the laughter of a *jadugarni* cannot make you laugh. It would frighten you instead!

Sabzpari : Oh! You are very intelligent!

Faizan : Yes, we call her *Akila Bua*…our very own Aunty Intelligent!

Kaasni : Why don't you tell us who you are?

Sabzpari : Sabzpari, the Green Fairy!

Kaasni, Faizan : Sabzpari!

Sabzpari : Yes, Sabzpari is my name

Faizan : Oh I get it. You are shedding this pretty green light. That is why they must call you Sabzpari. Sabz means green in Urdu and a pari is a fairy!

Sabzpari : *(Impressed)* You are no less!
Faizan preens a bit and looks at Kaasni.

Kaasni : But why do people think that you are a *jadugarni*? A sorceress?

Sabzpari : Human beings are like this. If they don't know enough about something they begin to fear it. Then they give that thing such a name that others are afraid too!
Faizan points towards the jaltarang.

Faizan : And this *jaltarang*?

Kaasni : People say there is some magic in this *jaltarang*. Not good magic. Some black magic. As soon as people hear its sound, they lose their senses and disappear in the depths of the pond…
Sabzpari laughs loudly.

Sabzpari : There is some magic in it but nothing that will harm anybody. This *jaltarang* is a keepsake of my mother!

Faizan : Your mother?

Sabzpari : Yes, fairies have mothers too!

Faizan : It seems to me that you are ready to tell us a story…

Sabzpari : Well…there is a story. If you both would like to listen…

Kaasni : Tell us, but I hope it is not from the black and white era!

Sabzpari : It is an old story but I don't think you will mind…

Faizan : Then tell us!

Sabzpari : The story begins with this pond…

Kaasni : With this pond?

Sabzpari : Yes, this pond was not always a pond!

Faizan : Then what was it? A bed of sand?

Sabzpari : A river used to flow here…

Kaasni, Faizan : A river?

Sabzpari : Yes…a river. A long, deep, wide and full flowing river. My mother's childhood was spent here. Then there were fish and shells galore. As the number of people grew the river was hemmed in. By and by, it became such a weak, thin stream that my mother could not play any more and the fish could not swim. The people did the rest. Soon garbage from every house found its way here. The cloud of stink that rose up from the water was enough to choke anyone's lungs. The stink affected my *Nani*…

Faizan : *Nani*?

Sabzpari : Yes, fairies have *Nanis* too!

Kaasni : What happened to *Nani*?

Sabzpari : The stink choked my *Nani* to death…
Silence reigns as if everybody is in mourning. Sabzpari breaks it to continue with her story.

Sabzpari : My mother was left all alone

Faizan : All alone?

Sabzpari : Yes!

Kaasni : How could she live all alone?

Sabzpari : So she was sent to another river…

Faizan : Another river?

Sabzpari : Yes, she went to my *Dadi*. That river was very far away. My mother grew up there and then I was born there

Kaasni, Faizan : Then?

Sabzpari : Then the same thing happened to that river. The waste of countless cities began to sully the clear stream. This waste did not just stink, it was also poisonous. The poison that comes from factories. As time passed people grew more and more careless. It became harder for us to stay alive…

Kaasni : It is happening to us too!

Sabzpari : That is why my mother said to me one day that I was old enough to look after myself and others. Since human beings don't care for each other, I was to care for them too. I did not understand what she meant, so she told me that she was sending me where she had spent her childhood. She said, go and revive that drying stream…

Faizan : But how?

Sabzpari : I had also asked the 'how' question!

Kaasni : So did Ma tell you what to do?

Sabzpari : When I asked Ma how I should revive it, she said, you will have to find your own way!

Faizan : By yourself?

Sabzpari : Yes, by myself! Then Ma gave me this *jaltarang* and said if you begin to miss me, play a tune on this. I will fly to your side and the day, even after playing the *jaltarang*, I don't come… *Sabzpari fell silent*

Kaasni : And?

Sabzpari : …then you will know that this river has choked me to death too…
Sabzpari is deeply sorrowful. So are the children. Kaasni tries to lift her spirits.

Kaasni : But you play the *jaltarang* everyday?

Sabzpari : Yes, when I came here, by the time it was evening, I would miss my mother very much. Then I would play the *jaltarang*. As soon as she would hear the sound, she would come to me and we would talk through the night. She would return before daybreak. This would happen everyday. As the sun set, my *jaltarang* would play and…

Kaasni : And people thought this was the magic of a *jadugarni*. They were scared of the sound of the *jaltarang*!

Faizan : Oh yes, they were very scared!

Sabzpari : Yes…in a way this was a good thing. People stopped coming to this side. They stopped throwing garbage in the pond and the water level rose. Before I could find a way, my *jaltarang* had found it!

Kaasni : Your mother was so wise!

Faizan : Like me!
Kaasni slaps him playfully.

Sabzpari : Ma was indeed very wise. Perhaps she had given me the *jaltarang* for this reason. *(thinks about something)* I don't know what will happen now…

Kaasni, Faizan: Why? What happened now?
Sabzpari stays quiet for a bit and then says haltingly as if in pain:

Sabzpari : Now Ma does not come to me… even if I play the *jaltarang*…
Both the children are shocked.

Kaasni, Faizan : You mean…
There are tears in Sabzpari's eyes and she sings in a sorrowful voice:

Sabzpari's song : I cannot hear my mother anymore
Nothing can be heard of the musical score
I have no friend, no partner, nobody cares
As I sit and cry alone in despair
I want my mother's lap again
Somebody tell her, I wait in vain!
As the song finishes, overcome with grief, Sabzpari sobs. Both the children are in tears too. This goes on for some time. Suddenly you can hear the noise of people searching for the two. Sabzpari hastily wipes her tears and tells the children:

Sabzpari : Both of you must go now. It is really late. People are on their way here to look for the two of you…
The noise of people approaching grows louder. Both the children spring to attention.

Sabzpari : Just one moment…
Both of them stop. The Sabzpari plays the jaltarang. A quick tune rises and then sinks immediately.

Sabzpari : Tears in your eyes is not a sight I like to see!
Both the children touch their cheeks in surprise.

Kaasni, Faizan : Where did our tears go?

Sabzpari : They are here!
Both the children stare at Sabzpari in astonishment. She spreads her hands towards them. On each of her palms is a shining green pearl.

Sabzpari : Yes, it is the tears you shed for my mother and me. Now these are the pearls of our friendship that I will always keep safe with me!

Faizan : But what will we have?
Kaasni glares at him in mock anger. Sabzpari laughs.

Faizan : Like a keepsake… something to remember you by…

Sabzpari : You will get a keepsake. A keepsake of our friendship…
As she says this Sabzpari goes down into the water and disappears with a splash. The stage is in darkness and the sounds of people are audible and then small lanterns bob in the dark. Every now and then, you can hear voices of people calling out the names of Kaasni and Faizan. After some time, the lanterns leave the stage. The stage lights come on. Centre stage is the Sabzpari's jaltarang.

Faizan, Kaasni : Oh! The *jaltarang*!
Both of them run up to it.
The keepsake of our friendship!

Kaasni : Come, let us tell everybody right away!
Both of them start calling out to the other children:

Kaasni : Daksha, Raksha, Shama…

Faizan : Rama, Chinku, Rinku…

Chorus : Why are you yelling? We are right here!
All the children arrive pell-mell on the stage and stop short when they see the jaltarang. Seeing the others hesitate, the smallest boy steps forward. He gets close to the jaltarang and without touching its cups inspects it very carefully. Then he looks deeply at Kaasni and Faizan and suddenly lets out a yell.

Small boy : IN-CRE-DIBLE!
As soon as he speaks, all the others jump and begin to sing and dance.

Chorus : It is all clear now, the story tells you how!

The children pick up the cups of the jaltarang and exit the stage singing.

Faizan : There is no magic and no *jadugarni*
We are telling you oh Daddy Mummy!

Kaasni : We just want to say, be wise and use reason to find the real way!
Our village…
From the right the first team enters. They have their backs to the audience.

First Team : Yeah Yeah Yeah!

Kaasni, Faizan : Our pond…
From the left the second team enters. They also have their backs to the audience.

Second Team : Yeah Yeah Yeah!
Both the teams, from one end of the stage to the other, present the scene of a wave in the water and sing.

Chorus : We love our village, we do, and the pond is ours toooo!

As the song ends, all the children turn towards the audience. Each of the children has a big cardboard square hanging from their neck. These squares have pictures of fish, frogs, herons, cranes, crab, turtle, water hens, pipal, sycamore and other plants found in the water, made by the children. The sound of the jaltarang can be heard and from the wave created by the children, the picture of the jaltarang emerges gradually. The lights dim slowly and the whole scene turns into a tableau.

---------- **Curtain** ----------

Read India

Pratham Books was set up in 2004, as part of the Read India movement, a nation-wide campaign to promote reading among children. Pratham Books is a not-for-profit organization that publishes quality books for children in multiple Indian languages. Our mission is to see "a book in every child's hand" and democratize the joy of reading. If you would like to contribute to our mission, please email us at info@prathambooks.org.

Shahid Anwar was an author, playwright and a translator who wrote both in Urdu and Hindi. Known for his powerful but simple style, his plays have been performed across the country. His successful plays include *Gair Zaroori Log, Soopna Ka Sapna* and *Hamare Waqt Mein*. Shahid received many accolades for his outstanding work in the field of Urdu drama including the Mohan Rakesh Samman and Delhi Urdu Academy's Urdu Drama Award.

Born in a farmer family in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh, Nilesh had a keen interest in drawing since his childhood. He has a master's degree in fine arts and got to hone his skills further at Riyaaz Academy. He has illustrated for children's magazines like *Chakmak* and *Phirki*. This is his first book for Pratham Books.

The village elders believe she sheds green light and plays the jaltarang to bewitch innocent people near the village pond. Kaasni and Faizan decide to investigate if she even exists because they don't believe in jadugarnis and paris! This lively play interweaves fantasy and reality with rib-tickling humour to establish the importance of a clean environment. Read it and get inspired to perform it for hours of fun.

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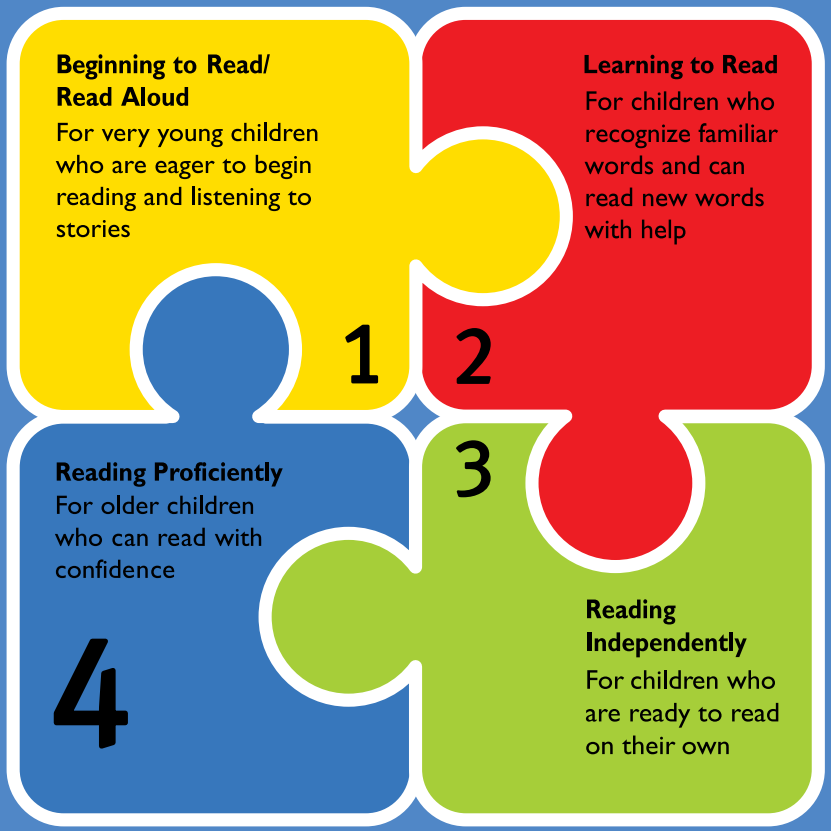

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